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# THE PEARL: AN INTERPRETATION

by

ROBERT MAX GARRETT

Assistant Professor of English

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON  
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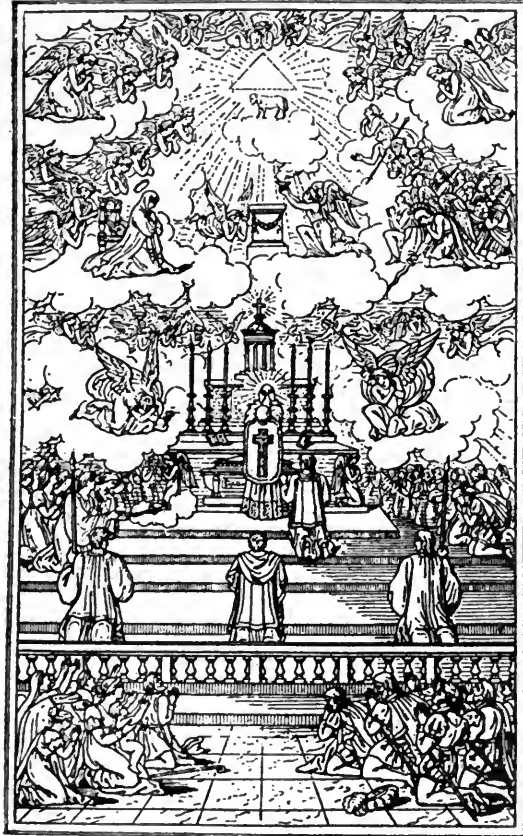
UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

THE PEARL  
AN INTERPRETATION

BY  
ROBERT MAX GARRETT, Ph. D. (Munich)  
Assistant Professor of English  
University of Washington  
Seattle

NO. 1000  
ALBANY, N.Y.

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Quis fidelium habere dubium possit, in illo  
Jesu Christi mysterio angelorum chorus adesse,  
summa imis sociari, terram coelestibus jungi.  
Alcuin. p.14.

NO. 1000  
ALBANY, N.Y.

TO  
PROFESSOR FREDERICK MORGAN PADELFORD

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

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## The Pearl: An Interpretation

### INTRODUCTION

When we study the poetry of the Middle Ages, especially the religious verse, without taking into account the vital teachings of the Eucharist, we are doing violence to the age—we are taking both color and fragrance from the flower. Men based their hopes of heaven upon the Eucharist; they found therein the full and perfect revelation of Deity; they looked to it as the key of heaven; they found therein union with their own loved ones who were dead; they experienced therethrough day by day a personal relationship with the Incarnate God; they built their churches as a setting for the great drama of love enacted within; they developed their art to do honor to that great Mystery which was the sacred heart of the Middle Ages. At once we think of the great tributes to the Eucharist: the sublime Mass of Corpus Christi prepared by St. Thomas Aquinas, with its marvelous hymns; the *Opus Majus* of Roger Bacon which is brought to a climax by an argument for "the sacrament of the altar" as containing in itself the highest good—(1) that is, the union of God with man; the Legend of the Holy Grail; (2) and the Ghent Altar—the adoration of the Lamb, by the brothers Van Eyck.

To this goodly fellowship I am convinced that we should add the fourteenth-century poem of *The Pearl*.

The student of the symbolism of *The Pearl* has two scholars above others to thank for collecting materials which are indispensable to the task of interpretation. I mean Dr. Charles G. Osgood in the Introduction and Notes to his edition of *The Pearl*, and Prof. W. H. Schofield in his paper called "Symbolism, Allegory and Autobiography in *The Pearl*," in the Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 1909. To this mass of material I have been able to add only a little. I have long felt, however, that the poem was more subtly symbolic than Prof. Schofield allows, and that it possesses a more essential simplicity than is ascribed to it by Dr. Osgood. I think Prof. Schofield well expresses the attitude of one who loves this poem and who strives to hear it tell its own secret, when he says: "My desire has not been to read new possible meanings into the poem, in sympathy with our modern individualism, but simply to bring the light of mediæval conceptions to bear upon and elucidate the thought of a poem which

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(1) Schaff, History of the Christian Church, V, 698.

(2) "In a word, it is a parable of the Mass. It is the central rite of the Church, the Holy Communion, interpreted in the symbols of a story. Repentance, absolution, the long struggle of self-mastery, the sustaining grace of the great sacrament, the reward of heavenly vision, are expressed in terms of knighthood, are brought home in the romance of a quest. What the 'Pilgrim's Progress' centuries afterward did for Protestantism, the 'Holy Grail' did for mediæval Catholicism. It put religion into a story of aspiration, struggle and attainment. As all romance is ideal, so this romance is most ideal of all; and as the idealism of romance is its most vital quality, so this highest ideal of romance has lived through all the centuries and won all Christian people." Baldwin, English Mediæval Literature, p.84.

is distinctly a product of its time. . . . A learned man of the fourteenth century was so used to interpretations of the pearl that the word could hardly be mentioned without a great many rising to his memory instantly. And anyone then who wrote or read a poem entitled *The Pearl* would expect the treatment to be allegorical. He would not, however, expect the author of a poem to include a list of all previous or possible interpretations of the word, but only such as the poet chose to emphasize at that particular time for a particular purpose. Only a dull writer would need or desire to accompany his poem with a 'key' to its meaning," p.639. ing," p. 639.

It was this desire to go to the age in which the poem was conceived for a key to its meaning that led me to the conclusion that this poem has as its central idea the fundamental teachings of the Eucharist.

#### EUCCHARISTIC DOCTRINE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The latter part of the fourteenth century was a time of furious controversy over the Eucharist. The great exponent of the radical view was Wyclif, who seems to have been vacillating in his theories of the Eucharist, being accused by his opponents of a view practically Zwinglian and himself announcing a view of Consubstantiation which was scarcely less heretical. Nevertheless the seeds of dissent were sown by him, and the more conservative saw in the fact that he was stricken by paralysis while assisting at mass in his own parish church a judgment of God. Against Wyclif were ranged the friars of Oxford whom he denounced as heretics as far as the Eucharist was concerned—apparently an *argumentum ad absurdum* intended to make the logic of the friars ludicrous. Popular sentiment then as now was overwhelmingly on the side of the insurgent, and the friars have received scant justice for their really excellent championship of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which was vital to the life of the historic Church. Even Shirley (3) is scornful of the misquotations of the Franciscan Tyssington while he passes over similar lapses on the part of Wyclif with indulgence.

According to a view now current the doctrine of Transubstantiation is held to have been a crude, barbarous and revolting superstition which overthrew the nature of a sacrament and which impeded the onward march of the spirit. This view arises from slight and partisan reading in the literature of the subject. That there were people who failed to grasp the deep spirituality of the doctrine cannot be denied; also it cannot be denied that sometimes attention to the sacramentals superseded or obscured the constant and proper use of the sacraments. However, it is not with the abuses of the doctrine that we are concerned, but rather with the spiritual aspect of the doctrine itself.

The fundamental fact in the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar is the unity of the Body, that the consecrated Host is Christ's own Body, not in the sense of confining Him to the tiny plot of the wafer, but of uniting the particle and the one who receives worthily to the great mystical body of all faithful people, and

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(3) Fasciculi Zizaniorum. pp.133, 250, 491.

to the head of that body, Christ Himself. As the Augustinian Friar Thomas Wyltinton, an opponent of Wyclif, says:

"It is observed that the bread which we break is the medium by which the Body of Christ is partaken of by us, or that we partake of the Body of Christ; because by receiving the sacrament of the altar which is broken by us and is the spiritual bread of the soul, we receive the true Body of Christ which was assumed from the Virgin."

" . . . denotatur quod panis quem frangimus est medium quo corpus Christi participatur a nobis, vel nos participamus de corpore Christi: quia recipiendo sacramentum altaris quod frangitur a nobis, et est panis animæ spiritualis, recipimus verum corpus Christi, quod fuit assumptum de Virgine," Fasciculi Zizaniorum, p. 203.

Again, quoting St. Augustine, he says: "'When we eat Christ we do not make parts of Him; in fact it is thus in the Sacrament, everyone receives his part'—that is, of the sacrament; hence Christ eaten in parts should be understood Christ eaten in parts of the Sacrament; because by receiving each a part of the Sacrament the whole of Christ is received."

"Quando manducamus Christum partes de illo non facimus. Et quidem in sacramento sic fit: unusquisque accipit partem suam,' scilicet sacramenti. Ergo illud, per partes manducatur Christus, debet intelligi, per partes sacramenti manducatur Christus: quia recipiendo quaecunque partem sacramenti, recipitur totus Christus," *ibid.*, p. 201.

Likewise the Franciscan Friar John Tyssington, another notable opponent of Wyclif, says: "Moreover, the Body and Blood of Christ, while they are bread and wine according to the species, are the sacrament of the Church, or of ecclesiastical unity; and thus is it properly a Eucharist, a thanksgiving; yet they are bread and wine according to the species wheresoever they are. And yet there is only one bread upon all altars; for just as if the Word as substance were to be made manifest in various men, it would be only one man, on account of the unity of the Word; (4) thus however much the Body is united sacramentally with diverse species in diverse altars, nevertheless on account of the unity of the Body there is only one Bread. And concerning the body and the one bread according to number, the Apostle says: 'For we being many are one bread and one body.' For we are all this one bread and this one body; not, of course, in essence, but in signification, or comparison. Just as Matthew says that John is Elias, not naturally, but figuratively, because as John did in respect to the first Advent, so will Elias do in respect to the second Advent. So through a like comparison we are that bread and that body; for as bread is made of many grains, and a body is made of many members which have not the same activity, so also the Church of Jesus Christ." "Caro autem

(4) I find this a passage of peculiar difficulty. Prof. E. K. Rand very kindly refers to the use of "suppositum" in "Boethius Contra Eutychem et Nestorium at the end (Peiper pp. 197, 95) and elsewhere; i.e., referring to the manifestation of the Word (verbi surely refers to the Logos here) in particular specimens of naturae humanae. With Boethius in mind (103 ff.) I should translate 'If the Word as substance' etc., or 'the substantiated Word'—an ugly word, but given in the Oxford Concise Dictionary."

et sanguis Christi, dum sunt panis et vinum secundum speciem, sunt sacramentum ecclesiæ, seu ecclesiasticæ unitatis; et sic sunt proprie eucharistia; dum, scilicet, sunt panis et vinum secundum speciem, et ubi sic sunt. Et sic non est nisi unus panis in omnibus altaribus; quia, sicut si suppositum verbi assumeret diversas naturas humanas, tamen non foret nisi unus homo, propter unitatem suppositi ita quamvis corpus uniatur sacramentaliter diversis speciebus, in diversis altaribus, tamen propter unitatem corporis non est nisi unus panis. Et de isto corpore et pane uno secundum numerum, dicit apostolus, *Unus panis et unum corpus multi sumus*. Omnes enim nos sumus ille unus panis, et illud unum corpus; non quidem per essentiam, sed per significationem, seu assimilationem. Quomodo dicit Matthæus quod Johannes ipse est Elias, non in natura, sed in figura; quia quemadmodum Johannes se habuit respectu primi adventus, ita Elias se habebit respectu secundi adventus. Per similem quoque assimilationem nos sumus ille panis, et illud corpus; quia sicut panis ex multis granis congeritur, et illud corpus ex multis membris, quæ non eundem actum habent, conficitur; ita quoque ecclesia Jesu Christi," Fasciculi Zizani-  
orum, p. 176.

St. Thomas Aquinas says likewise: "The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church's unity. But a sacrament bears the likeness of the reality whereof it is the sacrament. Therefore the Eucharist is one sacrament," Summa, p.235. "The faithful intercommunicate," p.239. "With regard to the present it has another meaning, namely, that of Ecclesiastical unity, in which men are aggregated through this Sacrament; and in this respect it is called Communion or *Συναγίς*. For Damascene says that it is called Communion because we communicate with Christ through it, both because we partake of His Flesh and Godhead, and because we communicate and are united to one another through it. With regard to the future it has a third meaning, inasmuch as this sacrament foreshadows the Divine fruition which shall come to pass in heaven, and according to this it is called Viaticum, because it supplies the way of winning thither. And in this respect it is called Eucharist, that is good grace, because full of grace," p.239.

The same trend of thought is ascribed to the great "Lincolniensis" in the following passage: "Grosseteste writes: 'Every other sacrament receives its power of uniting us in communion with God from this Sacrament which is primarily and principally unitive. For in this Sacrament is the true Flesh of our Savior which He took from the Virgin, and in which He suffered to redeem us; not separated from His Soul nor from His Divinity, but inseparably united. And so in this Sacrament is the Son of God, perfect God and perfect Man, Who in taking our humanity united us to Himself, and made us communicate in one nature with Himself; and then giving back to us His Flesh thus pre-eminently dignified to eat, He gathers us together and unites us with His own Person, that we may be all one in Christ, perfect in His perfection,'" Waldensis, De Euch. II, 557, quoted from Fr. Bridgett, pp. 313-314.

This is beautifully expressed in the Hymn of St. Thomas Aquinas, "Lauda Sion," the Sequence for the Mass for Corpus Christi Day:



"Sub diversis speciebus,  
Signis tantum et non rebus,  
Latent res eximiae.  
Caro cibus, sanguis potus:  
Manet tamen Christus totus,  
Sub utraque specie.

A sumente non concisus,  
Non confractus, non divisus,  
Integer accipitur.  
Sumit unus, sumunt mille;  
Quantum iste, tantum ille,  
Nec sumptus consumitur."

A very good and representative version of this doctrine is found in the following passage from "A Sawley Monk's Version of Grostete's 'Castle of Love'," (E.E.T.S. O.S. 98. 428-9):

"God of all his meruailes made vs a gode mynd  
When he wold in forme of brede dwell with mankind.  
Thurgh the vertue of cristis wordes of the sacrament  
That the prest reherces at his messe with gode entent,  
Brede into cristis flesch, & wyne in to his blode,  
Sudanly is turned, for mannes gastly fode;  
Nother brede ne wyne is after sacryng in the messe,  
Bot verray goddes flesch & blode, in their liknes.  
Ther is of brede & wyne sauour, colour & figure,  
Lastand thurgh goddes wil agayn cours of nature;  
But vnder this liknes is non other substance  
But goddes body & his blode with thair purtenance.  
In crist god & man, soul & body, flesch & blode  
Are so fast knyt to-geder with kynde & loue gode  
That whar that is any party of cristis awen body  
Ther will god be & thei all verrailly.  
Ther-for vndir liknes both of wyn & brede  
Is verray both god & man that for vs was dede.  
This is goddes dede, & passes mannes wit—  
He has mekel mede that trewly trowes hit. . . .  
If thou receyue his flesch & blode worthily,  
Thou sal be as (a) quik lym of his body;  
And if thou kepe the so out of dedly synne,  
As a cosyn of his thou sal heven wyne. . . .  
If man wil with al his myȝt loue this sacrament  
& vse it out of dedly synne ay with gode entente,  
Nother tunge may wel telle ne hert may wel think  
The noble and gastly profit of this mete & drink."

## THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

This doctrine of the Eucharist as the unitive force in the spiritual realm is closely akin to the great doctrine of the Communion of Saints. So closely was the Eucharist associated with the Communion of Saints in the teaching of the age that sometimes in the expositions of the Creed that have come down to us, the article "Sanctorum communionem" is explained by this Sacrament. For instance, in John Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests (E.E.T.S. O.S. 31) he paraphrases this portion of the Creed as follows:

"In þe holy gost I leue welle;  
In holy chyrche and hyre spelle,  
In goddes body I be-leue nowe,  
A-monge hys seyntes to ȝeue me rowe." vv.444-7.

Also, though not so well expressed, in the Sawley Monk's Version of Grostete's Castle of Love we find:

"We trow in haly kirk, & haly mannes dedes,  
That god ay with his grace thaim strenghtes wel & spedes  
In trouth & sacramentz & dedes of charite,  
Thurgh which to the repentant forgifnes of synne sal be." p. 432.

This belief that at the Mass the whole company of heaven was present is registered in the Canon itself: "Remember, O Lord, Thy servants, both men and women NN., and all those present and all faithful Christians whose faith and devotion are known to Thee; for whom we offer unto Thee this sacrifice of praise, for themselves and all theirs, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their safety and security, and they now pay their vows to Thee, the eternal, living and true God. Communicating with and venerating the memory . . . of the ever-virgin Mary . . . and all Thy Saints. . . . We therefore beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thou wouldst be pleased to accept this oblation of our servitude, as also of Thy whole family. . . ." "Memento, Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum N. et omnium circumstantium atque omnium fidelium Christianorum quorum tibi fides cognita est et nota devotio; pro quibus tibi offerimus vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis, pro se suisque omnibus pro redemptione animarum suarum, pro spe salutis et incolumitatis suæ, tibi que reddunt, vota, sua æterno Deo, vivo et vero. Communicantes et memoriam venerantes . . . gloriosæ et semper virginis Mariæ . . . et omnium sanctorum tuorum. . . . Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostræ, sed et cunctæ familiæ tuæ, quæsumus, Domine, ut placatus accipias. . . ." Missale ad Usum Sarum, pp. 614-5. See also the York Use, Lay Folk's Mass Book, pp. 104-6.

The following witnesses testify to the same: Alcuin says: "Who of the faithful could doubt that in this mystery of Jesus Christ the chorus of angels is present, the highest consorts with the lowest, the earth is joined with the heavens." "Quis fidelium habere dubium possit, in illo Jesu Christi mysterio angelorum chorus adesse, summa imis sociari, terram coelestibus jungi," Migne P. L. CI. 1087. St.

Anselm says: "Do not doubt that in this hour of the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Thy Redeemer, angels are present with their Creator." "*Nec dubites in illa hora sacrificii corporis et sanguinis tui Redemptoris angelos adesse suo creatori,*" Migne P. L. CLVIII. 918. Innocent III says: "The angels are always present in this sacrifice." "*Angeli semper in sacrificio præsentes existunt,*" Migne P. L. CCXVII. 891. Odo de Soliaco, Bishop of Paris, says: "The whole company of heaven is present with our Saviour as often as the mass is celebrated." "*Tota curia coelestis cum Salvatore nostro præsens adest quoties missa celebratus,*" Migne P. L. CCXII. 60.

The course mapped out by the Church to be observed by one who had lost a dear one by death, was to cease mourning and seek aid for himself and for his dear one in the holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist as the one sure meeting place (5). If the soul of the departed were imperfect the Eucharist was the greatest offering that might be made for reparation and cleansing; if the soul were pure enough to enter heaven, the Eucharist was the most intimate meeting place where the lonely mourner might flee for communion with his loved one. Yet this contact must lose its earthly selfishness and seclusion and must be sought through the mediation of and in the presence of Christ, in His Sacrament.

#### THE ADORATION OF THE LAMB

The great danger in an exposition of the place which the Eucharist held in the spiritual life of the fourteenth century is not exaggeration, but understatement. Nowadays when amongst many people that Sacrament is regarded purely as a memorial—sweetly pious, it is true, and to be approached with reverence; or as a social prerogative distinguishing the church member from the non-member or the confirmed person from the unconfirmed; or as an exhausted symbol which has lost whatever vague meaning it once may have possessed for the unenlightened; nowadays it is difficult to appreciate the awe, the delight, the ecstasy with which men approached it. There the contact with Christ was as real and more vital than was that of the Magi at Bethlehem. There they brought in the same worshipful awe all the gifts that hearts burning with love could lay at His feet. There they were lifted out of time and space and rapt into union with the eternal spring of energy. For a time individuality was merged into oneness with all perfection. It is this actual oneness of the whole Church at the Mass — the Church Militant, the Church Expectant and the Church Triumphant — which is expressed in the frontispiece of this book (6), which also Meucci has attempted to express in his painting of the Elevation, and greatest of all, the brothers Van Eyck, in the marvelous Adoration

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(5) As St. Ambrose says to Faustinus on his sister's death: "Therefore I think she is not so much to be deplored as to be followed by prayers, nor do I judge that she should be mourned with your tears but rather that her soul should be commended to God by oblations." "*Itaque non tam deplorandam, quam prosequendam orationibus reor; nec moestificandum lacrymis tuis, sed magis oblationibus animam ejus Domino commendandum arbitror,*" (Epist. 39, No. 4 [P.L., XVI. 1099]). Quoted from Rock II, 260.

(6) Permission to use this cut was granted by the publishers, the Society of Saints Peter and Paul.

of the Lamb, known more commonly as the Ghent Altar. To the man whose path has not led him into the more intimate spiritual life of the Middle Ages, this altar piece would present only a well-massed, well-executed design from the Apocalypse together with scenes commemorative of the history of the Redemption. To the one who reads in close sympathy with the beliefs of the Middle Ages, it is clear at once that the painters were attempting the exposition of the Eucharist. As one who is peculiarly well fitted to judge the spiritual things of the Middle Ages, Mr. Ralph Adams Cram, says:

"The work is one vast, comprehensive and sacramental manifestation of the central Catholic sacrament of the mass, searching and final in its symbolism, consummate in its mastery of all the elements that enter into the makeup of a great work of pictorial and decorative art, unapproached and unapproachable in its splendor of living and radiant colour. In its philosophical grasp, its technical perfection, its unearthly beauty, its communication of the very essence of a fundamental mystery, and in its evocative power it staggers the imagination and takes its place amongst the few great works of man, in any category, which are so far beyond what seems possible of achievement that they rank as definitely superhuman. So far as its spiritual content is concerned, it can no more be estimated than can the mass itself, or the Venus of Melos. If the Van Eycks are responsible for this, they rank with St. Thomas Aquinas and Shakespeare and Leonardo da Vinci as the greatest creative forces amongst men. Of course they were not, nor the others, named. Somehow each was used by something greater than he: the concentrated consciousness of his fellows, the underlying and informing time-spirit of an era — or why not God Himself? — as a channel through which and by which absolute truth was communicated to man, who, of his own motion, can do much, but not so much as this," Heart of Europe, p.228. (7)

#### THE PEARL OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The pearl is par excellence the precious stone of the New Testament. In the Old Testament we have lists of precious stones in various places testifying to the remnant of belief in the virtue of precious stones both natural and engraved (see the author's "Precious Stones in Old English Literature," *Münchener Beiträge* XLVII, pp. 3-5). With the exception of the list in the Apocalypse of the twelve ✓

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(7) The possibility of connecting the Ghent Altar with the poem of The Pearl for purposes of comparison and elucidation has already occurred to two scholars, at least: Dr. Osgood, in a footnote at the close of his introduction, while speaking of the economy of the poem, compares it in passing to "Van Eyck's Adoration of the Lamb, or Memling's vision of the emerald rainbow in the right wing of his triptych, The Marriage of St. Catherine. The study of either picture might be an effective means of entering into the spirit of The Pearl." Introduction, p.lviii.

Jusserand, in his *Literary History of the English People*, in commenting on The Pearl, says: "It seems as if the poet were describing beforehand, figure by figure, Van Eyck's painting at St. Bavon of Ghent," p.352.

As an example of the treatment of this dogma in the high Renaissance, it is well to study the description of the great custodia (tabernacle) of Seville Cathedral as described by its author, Juan de Arfe. See *The Arts and Crafts of Older Spain*, by Leonard Williams. 3 vols. Vol.III, App.C.

foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is a fairly close copy of the selection in the High Priest's breastplate, the pearl is the only precious stone mentioned in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the pearl does not occur at all. The passages in the New Testament are: "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," St. Matthew 7,6; "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it," St. Matthew, 13, 45,46; "And the twelve gates (of the heavenly city) were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl," Rev. 21, 21. These are the important references to the pearl, the one in I Timothy 2, 9 being of no special value. But these three citations, two from the lips of Christ Himself, would be enough to invest the pearl with a rich symbolism—a paradise for the interpreter and commentator. Those interpretations are likely to be most favored which seek in the pearl something allied closely to Christ Himself.

To the man of the fourteenth century who was loyal to the Church and its teachings, Christ was more truly with His people in His covenanted meeting place upon the altar than elsewhere. Witness the lovely song to our Lord present in the Sacrament:

"For loue myn herte wole toberste  
Whanne y pat fair loue biholde."

—The Love of Jesus. E.E.T.S. O.S. 24, p. 30.

So it will be profitable to see if there are any cases of identification of the pearl with the Eucharist.

#### THE PEARL AS SYMBOLIC OF THE EUCHARIST

The Host as Pearl—Candida. . . . Rotunda sit Hostia Christi.

Great care was taken in the preparation of altar-breads that no impurity or imperfection should be in them. They were made in a fitting place, by "ministers of the church" properly vested. Synodical enactments show how important it was to safeguard them from profane hands. In the Constit. Willielmi de Bleys, A. D. 1229, for the diocese of Lincoln we read: "Let the ministers of the Church, clad in surplices, sit in a proper place, when they make the hosts. The irons in which the hosts are to be baked should be lined with wax, not oil, or other grease; the hosts having a proper whiteness and a decent roundness should be offered upon the mensa of the altar." "Ministri ecclesie induti superpelliciiis in loco honesto sedeant, quando oblatas faciunt. Instrumentum, in quo oblatæ coquendæ sunt, cera tantum liniatur, non oleo, vel alio sagimento; oblatæ honestum candorem et decentem rotunditatem (8) hebetes, supra mensam altaris offerantur." Quoted from Rock, I, p. 124. Note.

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(8) St. Jerome sings the mystical praises of roundness which he links with high spiritual attainment, the Eucharist and the Festival of the Immaculate Lamb: "Through a circular room and by a circular staircase we ascend to the upper chamber of the Temple, which figure is held by the philosophers of this world to be the most beautiful amongst all schemata; for the heaven and the sun, and the moon and the other stars, and the

The order of the Synod held at Exeter in 1287 under Peter Quivil is as follows:

(cap. iv): "The breads must be flawless, white and round." "Sint et oblatae integrae candidae et rotundae." (Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist*, p. 31.) Again, in the *Constitutiones Synodales Sodorensis* (1350) it is ordered (cap ii): "The Host shall be of wheat, round and flawless and without spot, because the Lamb was without spot and no bone of it was broken. Hence the verse:

'White, wheaten, then, not large, round,  
Unleavened, unadulterated be the host of Christ,  
Stamped, not boiled, but baked with fire.'

"Hostia de frumento sit, rotunda et integra et sine macula, quia agnus extitit sine macula et os non fuit comminutum ex eo. Unde versus:

'Candida triticea, tenuis, non magna, rotunda,  
Expers fermenti, non mista sit hostia Christi,  
Inscribatur, aqua non cocta sed igne sit assa.' Woolley p. 31.

Wyclif mentions these two qualities: "As to þe first (heresy of the friars) we seyn, siker of oure feyth, þat þo whyte þing and rounde þat þe prest sacris, like to þo unsacrid oostis, and is broken and eeten is verrelly Godes body in þo fourme of bred." (*De Blasphemia contra Fratres*. Arnold III. p. 403). The Augustinian friar Thomas Wyntirton mentions "*ipsa alba hostia et rotunda consecrata . . . quae est ipsum corpus*." (*Fasciculi Zizaniorum* p. 198.)

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point of the earth; in the human body the eyes (like other stars) and the shape of the head which is the receptacle of all the senses, and the well-turned fingers, and the thighs and the arms reveal this roundness. Moreover, the upper room of the Temple to which we ascend from the lower regions to the higher, this I take to be that which in the Book of Kings, Elias occupied, and Elisha, and in the Acts of the Apostles, Tabitha (i.e., *δόρκας* and in Latin (*damula*) possessed, to the top of which she ascended through good works. Then, too, Peter the Apostle, upon whom the Lord builded the foundations of the Church, went above the upper room and came to the roof, which more significantly is called *δῶμα* in Greek, i.e., the solar chamber of the roof, and first acknowledged before the world the hitherto upknown sacraments of the Church. The Savior of the human race also made His Pasch in an upper room, an upper room great and broad, cleansed from all filth and made ready for the spiritual feast where He gave into the keeping of His disciples the mystery of the Body and Blood, and left to us the eternal Festival of the Immaculate Larmb." "Per rotundum autem & per cochleam ascendimus Templi coenaculum, quae figura inter omnia *σχήματα* a Philosophis quoque hujus saeculi pulchrior approbatur: dum & caelum, & sol, & luna, & astra caetera, & punctum terrae; in corporibus quoque humanis, oculi, quasi altera sidera, & figura capitis, quod omnium sensuum receptaculum est, teretesque digiti, & femina, & brachia hanc praeferunt rotunditatem. Porro coenaculum Templi, ad quod de angustioribus ad altiora conscendimus, illud puto esse, quod in Regum volumine Elias habuit, & Eliseus, & in Apostolorum actibus, Tabitha, id est, *δόρκας* & *damula* nostra possedit, quae bonis operibus ad summa conscenderat. Apostolus autem Petrus, super quem Dominus Ecclesiae fundamenta solidavit, transcendit coenaculum, & venit ad tectum, significantius Graece *δῶμα* dicitur, id est, tecti solarium: et incognita prius saeculo Ecclesiae sacramenta cognovit. Salvator quoque generis humani Pascha fecit in coenaculo, et magno latoque coenaculo, atque omni sorde purgato stratoque, & ad spirituale convivium praeparato, ubi mysterium Corporis & Sanguinis suis tradidit discipulis, & aeternam nobis agni immaculati reliquit festivitatem," Hieronymus (ed. Vallarsius) *Commentarium in Ezechielem*, Liber XII, Caput XLII, col.498.



These qualities are given a symbolic significance in the poem on the Feast of Corpus Christi:

"Beo þe makyng of þe oblee  
Wel and skilfoliche me may se  
Of wýche we make Godus flesch,  
Þis is þe saumple whose wol esch.  
Hit is made be seven skiles  
Aþeyn þe seuene dedly synnes:  
Aþeyn Lecherie hit is whit...  
Hit is round and liht to þrowe,  
Aþeyn Sleuþe, þat makeþ men slowe." EETS.OS.98.p.178.v.217. ff.

White, round, flawless, compared to the Lamb without spot, the host is possessed of such outward characteristics as might well bring to the mind of a poet beholding it, the Pearl of great price.

Indeed, the conception of the consecrated Host as a pearl is not unknown. It exists in very widely scattered places: In the Byzantine Liturgy before the eighth century a variant use for *μερίς*, a particle of the consecrated Bread, is 'pearl' (Brightman, *Eastern Liturgies*, Appendix O, p. 530), and in the Liturgy of the Coptic Jacobites in the rubric "he shall lay the *elements* from his hand on the paten," the Arabic reads *janhar*, pearls (ibid. p. 185).

Less remote than these is the reference from Venantius Fortunatus in his verses to Bishop Felix Bourges, written on his tabernacle made to contain the Reserved Host:

"How well constructed ought those golden gifts to be  
Which contain the great Pearl of the Sacred Body of the Lamb!"

"Quam bene juncta decent, sacerati ut corporis agni

Margaritum ingens aurea dona ferant," Venantii Fortunati Operum Pars I.

Misc.—Lib. III. Caput XXV. Ad Felicem episcopum Biturigensem, scriptum in turrem ejus.

#### THE EUCHARIST'S PEARL

Closely knit with this thought is that of the Holy Mysteries of the Eucharist as the Pearl of great price. St. John Chrysostom, in commenting on the passage, St. Matthew, 7.6., 'neither cast ye your pearls before swine,' says: "For on this account we celebrate the mysteries behind closed doors, and dismiss those not initiated, not because we discover any defect in them, but because many of them are too imperfect to be allowed to be present," Migne P.G. 57.311. Rabanus Maurus says: "By pearls is meant spiritual sacraments, as in the Gospel: 'neither cast ye your pearls before swine,' that is, do not intrust the inner mysteries to the impure." "Per margaritas spiritualia sacramenta, ut in Evangelio: 'ne mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos,' id est, interna mysteria non committatis immundis," Migne P. L. 112, p. 996. Quoted from Schofield, p. 635.

St. Jerome, in commenting on the merchant and the goodly pearls, says: "The good pearls which the peddler sought are the Law and the prophets. Hear, Marcion; hear, Manichaeans; the good pearls are the Law and the prophets and familiarity with the Old Testament. However, the one most precious pearl is the knowledge of the Savior (9), the Sacrament of His Passion, and the Mystery of His Resurrection. Which, when the merchant found, like Paul the Apostle, all the mysteries of the Law and the prophets and the former observances, in which he had lived blamelessly, he despised as filth and rubbish, that he might gain Christ. Not that the finding of the goodly pearl is the condemnation of the old pearls, but that in comparison with it, every other gem is of less worth." "Bonae margaritae, quas quaerit institor, Lex et prophetae sunt. Audi, Marcion; audi, Manichaeae: bonae margaritae sunt Lex et prophetae, et notitia veteris Instrumenti. Unum autem est pretiosissimum margaritum, scientia Salvatoris, et sacramentum passionis illius, et resurrectionis arcanum. Quod cum invenerit homo negotiator, similis Pauli apostoli, omnia legis prophetarumque mysteria, et observationes pristinas, in quibus inculpate vixerat, quasi purgamenta contemnit et quisquilias, ut Christum lucrifaciat (Philip. III). Non quo inventio novae margaritae condemnatio sit veterum margaritarum: sed quo comparatione ejus omnis alia gemma vilior sit," In Evangelium Matthaei. Migne P. L. 184.947.

Add to this the fine apostrophe addressed to our Lord in the Sacrament by Ogerius in his sermon on the Lord's Supper: "O great honor, inestimable exuberance of love, implanted goodness, incomprehensible pity! By His Will, we unworthy ones who are slaves, have come—and yet he has deigned to receive us and call us friends. Bestower of sweetness, lover of love—yes, even dear love itself, and blessed delight, and delightful tranquility, and sure security, and happy eternity, and eternal happiness, Lord Jesu, wholly desirable, wholly lovable, incomparable treasure, Pearl beyond price, life of the living, hope of the dying, and the eternal happiness of those who for His love are unhappy in this world." "O magna dignatio, inaeestimabilis charitatis exuberatio, inolita bonitas, ininterpretabilis pietas! Ab ejus conditione qui servi sumus, invenimur, indigni, et tamen nos dignatur habere et vocare amicos. Largitor dulcedinis, amator charitatis, imo charitas chara, et beata jucunditas, et jucunda tranquillitas, et secura securitas, et felix aeternitas, et aeterna felicitas, Dominus Jesus totus desiderabilis, totus amabilis, thesaurus incompara-

(9) This seems to be nearly the idea of Gower, in his *Mirour de l'Omme*, where the Pearl is Heavenly Contemplation conceived in the shell Devotion:

"Devocioun q'ensi s'acline  
A dieu, Isidre la diffine  
Semblable au moule en son degré,  
La quelle au ryve q'est marine  
S'escales overe a la pectrine,  
Si en recoit de douls rosé,  
Que chiet du ciel tout en celée,  
Dont puis deinz soi ad engendré  
La margarite blanche et fine;  
Ensi Devocioun en dée  
Conceit, s'elle est continué,  
La Contemplacioun divine."

vv.10813-10824.

bilis, margarita inestimabilis, vita viventium, spes morientium, aeterna eorum felicitas, qui pro illius amore se in hoc saeculo infelices fecere," Ogeri Sermo in Coena Domini. Migne P. L. 184.947.

Here, too, seems to belong the passage noticed by Prof. A. S. Cook, from St. Ephrem the Syrian, 'The Pearl; or Seven Rhythms on the Faith': "On a certain day a pearl did I take up, my brethren. I saw in it mysteries pertaining to the Kingdom; semblances and types of the Majesty; it became a fountain, and I drunk out of it mysteries of the Son. I put it, my brethren, upon the palm of my hand, that I might examine it; I went to look at it on one side, and it proved faces on all sides," Mod. Lang. Notes, Vol. XX, p. 118.

#### CHRIST AS THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Very closely linked with the foregoing passages are those which see in the pearl of great price, Christ. These are very numerous:

Origen says: "This is the precious pearl, namely Christ, the Word of God," Migne P. G. 13.847.

In the Carmina Orientio Tributa, De Epithetis Salvatoris Nostri, He is called "Pearl, Day, Lamb. Pearl, for what is found more precious? Whence Day? because He shines more brightly than the light; then because He is holy and innocent, He is called a Lamb Who alone can take away the sins of the world."

"margarita: quid hoc pretiosius inueniatur?

unde dies? quod luce magis resplendat.

tunc quia sit sanctus innoxius agnus habet

qui potuit solus peccatum tollere mundi." Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum

Latinorum ed. consilio et impensis Academiae Litterarum Caesareae Vin-  
dobonensis; Vol. XVI p. 288.

Bede, in his Exposition of the Gospel of St. Matthew, says: "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant seeking goodly pearls, etc. Having found a precious pearl he sold all that he had; because in comparison with the celestial life, all things become cheap. If you wish indeed to search for holy men, you will find one Jesus Christ, in Whom all guile is lacking, to be better than all." "Iterum simile est regnum coelorum homini negotiatori, quaerenti bonas margaritas, etc. Inventa una margarita pretiosa, omnia quae habuit vendidit; quia in comparatione coelestis vitae omnia habita vilescunt. Si vero sanctos homines scrutare vis, unum Jesum Christum, qui absque culpa est, omnibus meliorem invenies," Migne P. L. 69.

St. Ambrose calls Christ the Pearl (Migne P. L. 17.715); St. Paulinus of Nola calls Him "The Pearl of the Gospel" (Migne P. L. 61.276,298). Likewise in the Clavis S. Melitonis is: "Margarita, Dominus Jesus Christus. In Evangelio Inventa una pretiosa margarita," Analecta Sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi ed. J. B. Card. Pitra. Tom. II. p. 32. St. Augustine says: "'The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls. Having found one pearl of great price he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' The question is, why does it change from the plural number to the singular, as when the man sought goodly pearls, he

found one of great price, which, selling all that he had, he bought. Or, let us say, this man seeking good men, when he lives usefully with them, finds one greater than all, without sin, mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. ii.5); or seeking precepts under whose protection he may have converse with men, he finds at length a selection in which alone, the apostle says, all are contained; as, 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, and if there be any other commandment,' like separate pearls, they 'are comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' (Rom. xiii.8.9.) But it is to be understood that the man sought goodly pearls and found the One in Which all are contained, in the beginning the Word, and the Word with God, and the Word being God (Joan.i.1), shining with the whiteness of truth, and firm with the solidity of eternity, and alike on all sides with the beauty of divinity, by which is understood God, having penetrated the shell of flesh. For he had found a pearl in truth, which lay hidden for a time in the wrappings of mortality as in the hardness of a shell, at the bottom of this life and among the hard rocks of the Jews; he moreover has found the Pearl in truth who said: 'And though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know Him no more' (II Cor.v.15). Nor can anyone be at all worthy the name of Pearl unless he become one by having destroyed all carnal wrappings by which he has been covered (by human means or by vain fancies) that he may be perceived by certain reckoning to be pure, solid, and at no point at variance with himself (10). Moreover, all those true and firm and perfect ones are comprehended within that One by Whom all were made, which is the Word of God (Joan.i.1). However, which of the three it be (if there be any difference among them) that is signified by the name of the One Precious Pearl, its price is ourselves; who are not free to gain possession of it, unless for our freedom we despise all the things of this world which we possess. For when all our goods are sold, we cannot accept a greater price than ourselves; because embarrassed with such things, we have not been our own. So again we may give ourselves for this Pearl, not because we are worth much, but because we can give no more." "Simile est regnum coelorum homini negotiatori quærenti bonas margaritas. Inventa autem una pretiosa margarita, abiit et vendidit

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(10) Here belongs the passage from Cleanness (E.E.T.S. O.S. 1.69):

"þou may schyne þur; schryfte, þa; þou haf schome serued,  
 & pure þe with penaunce til þou a perle worþe.  
 Perle prayes is prys, þer perre is schewed;  
 þa; hym not derrest be demed to dele for penies,  
 Quat may þe cause be called, but for hir elene hwes,  
 þat wynnes worschyp, abof alle whyte stones?  
 For ho schynes so schyr þat is of schap rounde,  
 Wythouten faut oþer fylþe jif ho fyn were;  
 & wax euer in þe worlde in weryng so olde,  
 3et þe perle payres not whyle ho in pyese lasttes  
 & if it cheue þe chaunce vncheryst ho worþe,  
 þat ho blyndes of ble in bour þer ho ligges,  
 No-but wasch hir wyth wourchyp in wyn as ho askes,  
 Ho by kynde schal become clerer þen are;  
 þat he be sulped in sawle, seche to schryfte  
 & he may polyce hym at þe prest, by penaunce taken,  
 Wel brytter þen þe beryl oþer browden perles." v.1115 ff.

omnia quæ habuit, et emit eam.' Questio est cur a numero plurali ad singularem transierit, ut cum quærat homo bonas margaritas, unam inveniatur pretiosam, quam venditis omnibus quæ habet, emat. Aut ergo iste bonus homines quærens, cum quibus utiliter vivat, invenit unum præ omnibus sine peccato, mediatorem Dei et hominum, hominem Christum Jesum (I Tim.ii.5): aut præcepta quærens, quibus servatis cum hominibus recte conversetur, invenit dilectionem proximi, in quo uno dicit Apostolus omnia contineri; ut, *Non occides, non furaberis, non falsum testimonium dices, et si quod est aliud mandatum*, singulæ margaritæ sint, quæ in hoc sermone recapitulantur, *Diliges proximum tuum tanquam teipsum* (Rom.xiii.8.9). Aut bonus intellectus homo quærit, et invenit unum illud quo cuncti continentur, in principio Verbum, et Verbum apud Deum, et Verbum Deum (Joan.i.1), lucidum candore veritatis, et solidum firmitate eternitatis, et undique sui simile pulchritudine divinitatis, qui Deus, penetrata carnis testudine, intelligendus. Ille enim ad margaritam ipsam jam pervenerat, quæ in tegumentis mortalitatis, quasi concharum obstaculo, in profundo hujus sæculi, atque inter duritias saxæas Judæorum aliquando latuerat: ille ergo ad ipsam margaritam jam pervenerat, qui ait, *Et si noveramus Christum secundum carnem, sed nunc jam non novimus* (II Cor.v.16). Nec ullus omnino intellectus margaritæ nomine dignus est, nisi ad quem discussis omnibus carnalibus tegminibus pervenitur, quibus sive per verba humana, sive per similitudines circumpositas operitur, ut purus et solidus et nusquam a se dissonans, certa ratione cernatur. Quos tamen omnes veros et firmos et perfectos intellectus unus ille continet, per quem facta sunt omnia, quod est Verbum Dei (Joan.i.3). Quodlibet autem horum trium sit, vel si aliquid aliud occurrere potuerit, quod margaritæ unius et pretiosæ nomine bene significetur, pretium ejus est nos ipsi: qui ad eam possidendam non sumus liberi, nisi omnibus pro nostra liberatione contemptis, quæ temporaliter possidentur. Venditis enim rebus nostris, nullum earum majus accipimus pretium, quam nos ipsos; quia talibus implicati, nostri non eramus; ut rursus nos ipsos pro illa margarita demus, non quia tanti valeamus, sed quia plus dare non possumus," *Questionum Septemdecim in Matthæum Liber Unus. Migne P.L.35.1371.*

#### THE SMALLER PEARLS IN THEIR RELATION TO THE GREAT PEARL

St. Augustine, in the passage quoted above, has shown that the smaller pearls, which we may each become, are merged into the larger—the Pearl of Great Price. Compare with this passage the mystical interpretation of the pearly gates of the heavenly Jerusalem as given by Rupert of Deutz: " 'Et duodecim portæ, etc.' The apostles, as has already been said, are called both the foundations and the gates, in a wonderful wise—are called in the foundations by the names of precious stones, and in the gates by the glorious likeness of precious pearls; for Christ is the precious stone and the precious pearl, which, when the merchant had found (Matth.xiii), he bought, giving for it all that he had. He Himself making them in His own likeness, granted this to them, that in the foundations and in the gates they should be of the beauty of pearls. For the beauty, or grace, and the glory of these gates, through which, coming from the four quarters of the earth, we shall enter into that City, might not be expressed more beautifully nor more aptly than

by the name and nature of pearls. Truly, like as a noble woman adorned with precious pearls for the eyes of her husband is magnificent to the eyes of men; so this city which is the Church, is made magnificent by such princes, such fathers, such apostles, thus adorned like a bride for her husband Christ." "Sequitur adhuc: 'Et duodecim portæ (etc.).' Apostoli, sicut jam dictum est, et fundamenta dicuntur et portæ, miroque modo et in fundamentis pretiosorum nominibus lapidum, et in portis pretiosarum gloriosi prædicantur similitudine margaritarum: Christus enim pretiosus lapis et pretiosa margarita, quam inventam negotiator sapiens emit (Matth.xiii), datis omnibus suis, ipse conformes illos faciens sibi, hoc dedit illis, ut in fundamentis et in portis margaritæ sint decoris. Decor namque sive pulchritudo, et gloria portarum, per quas ad illam civitatem a quatuor mundi partibus venientes introivimus, pulchrius aut convenientius quam nomine vel specie margaritarum significari non potuit. Nimirum, sicut femina nobilis pretiosis præculta margaritis, solet ad oculos hominum gloriari, viro suo subornata; sic civitas illa quæ est Ecclesia, talibus principibus, tantis patribus, tam gloriosis apostolis gloriari potest, sponso suo Christo sic ornata ut sponsa." Comment. in Apocalypsim, Migne P.L.169.1202.

This brings to mind the great figure of the Church as the mystical body of Christ of which all the faithful are limbs or members, which figure, from the time of St. Paul, has been a Eucharistic figure: "For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" I Cor.x.17.

Bede says in commenting on the gates of the heavenly city: "The whole glory of the head is reflected in the body. And just as *the true Light which lighteth every man* (Joan.i), granted His saints to be the light of the world, so He Who is the One Pearl Which the wise merchant sold all that he had and bought (Matth.xiii), compares His own to the splendor of pearls." "Omnis gloria capitis refertur ad corpus. Et sicut *lux vera quæ illuminat omnem hominem* (Joan.i), sanctis donavit lumen esse mundi, sic et ipse, cum sit margarita singularis, quam negotiator sapiens venditis omnibus emat (Matth.xiii), suos nihilominus margaritarum fulgori comparat," Explanatio Apocalypsis Lib.III.Cap.xxi Migne P.L.93.293.

Quite apart from literary origins, as we are likely to see in the beautifully rounded limbs of children the likeness to pearls, in sheen and in color (11), in purity and in perfectness of form, so we understand the beauty of St. Andrew's address to the Cross: "Hail Cross dedicated to the body of Christ, and ornamented by His limbs as with pearls!" "Salve crux quæ in corpore Christi dedicata es: et ex membris ejus tanquam margaritis ornata" (In Lectio vi, in secundo Nocturno, as Antiphon there and Ad Matutinas, In Natali Sancti Andreæ, in the Sarum Breviary). And the interpretation of the pearl of great price by Wyclif brings with it a fuller confirmation of the mystical symbol: "þe secounde parable of Crist is said in þes wordis; *Eft soone þe rewme of hevene is liche to a man marchaund þat souzte good margaritees, and whanne he hadde foundun oon presciouse margarite, he wente out*

(11) cf. Dante, Paradiso iii.15:

"debili sì che perla in bianco fronte  
non vien men tosto alle nostre pupille."  
"So faint that a pearl on a white brow  
Comes no less quickly to our pupils."



and selde al þat he hadde, and bouȝte þis margarite. Þe rewme of hevene is clepid here þe Chirche, waundringe after Crist; for Crist, heed of al þe Chirche, bigan þe newe Testament; and fadirs of þis lawe, wiþ vertues of Crist, mai be clepid here þe kyngdom of hevene. Þis man þat chaffareþ here is clepid ech man þat comiþ to Goddis lawe and lyveþ þerafter. Þes margaritees ben treuþis foundun in Goddis law: Þis o margarite is Goddis word, treuþe of alle treuþis, oure Lord Jesus Crist, and þe same tresour þat was bifore foundun. Clerkis seien þat margarites ben prescious stones foundun in þe see wiþinne shellefishe; and þei ben on two maneres: sum hoolid and sum hool. And margaritis ben a cordial medecine, and þei maken faire mennis atire, and conforten mennis hertis. Þis oo margarite is oure Lord Jesus Crist, foundun in tribulacioun of see of þis world; and oþer margarites ben lymes of Crist, foundun in shellis of smale se fishes. Þe manheed of Crist is a margarite þat worshipiþ his Chirche and comfortiþ mennis hertis. Þe shelle of þis fishe is bodi of Crist, þat was stable and stef in all his temptaciouns. And he wiþ his martiris wern hoolid margarites. And so Crist, bi his two kyndis, is o margarite, holid and unholid; for Cristis Godheed miȝte not be hoolid; but his manheed was hoolid, as shewen his fyve woundis. And to bigge þis margarite many seintis han traveiled in þe state of grace and bicamen ful herty; for þis medecine of margarites haþ confortid alle martiris, and made hem herty for to die for þe love of treuþe. Confessouris and virgynes ben maad faire bi þis margarite, and ech state of men þat shal be saaf in hevene. Alle þes men sellen her goodis, as we have seid bifore, and bien þis margarite wiþouten any chaunging. For, as Ysay seiþ, sich men bien, wiþouten silver and wiþouten chaunging, boþ wyn and mylk. For men þat chaffaren wiþ God and bien hem hevene lesen not þat þei ȝyven, but hav alle þingis betere þat þei hadden bifore, and bi a stabler titel." Sermon LXXXIV, Arnold, *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, I, 286-287.

To summarize: The Host is round, white, flawless, like unto the Lamb without spot. The consecrated Host is the great Pearl of the sacred body of the Lamb. The holy mystery of the Eucharist is the precious Pearl which the merchant sought, for Christ is there present, Who is the Pearl of Great Price. We may become pearls by destroying carnal desires and giving ourselves in exchange therefore. Thus we may become a living member of the great Pearl Who is Christ.

#### THE POEM OF THE PEARL

In order to compare more closely this interpretation of the Mystical Pearl with the idea as set forth in *The Pearl*, it will be well to review the contents of the poem: (12)

##### I

A pearl fit for a prince, peerless, perfect—alas! I lost her in an arbor; it fell through the grass to the ground.

Oftentimes I go there where it sprang from me, to mourn. But a sweet song of comfort came to me while I was there.

(12) I have made the synopsis to conform to the stanza division.

Good must die for good to be born, as wheat must die before you can have grain. What riches must spring from the death of the pearl!

On a certain high festival in August, I went to that spot which was overshadowed by flowers which gave forth a fair perfume.

I gave myself up to despair even though reason forbade; I bemoaned my pearl even though the nature of Christ made known to me comfort. At last I fell asleep.

## II

My body was left there—my soul went to an unknown place of beauty. The hills and trees were beautiful, the gravel was precious pearl that outshone the sun.

The beauty made me forget my grief, the odors satisfied me as food, the birds sang more sweetly than gitern or sytol.

The farther I went in the woodland the more inexhaustible were its charms. At length I reached a river.

The banks were beryl, the sound of its ripple was sweet, the stones on the bottom were precious, all gleaming.

## III

The beauty of it all filled me with joy and abated my sorrow. The farther I followed the stream the happier I was, just as when fortune entices a man for joy or for sorrow, he is eager to push after her.

I was happier than mortal heart can tell. I thought the land on the other side was Paradise, but the water was too deep to cross.

My longing became stronger to cross to the other side. I was looking in vain for a ford when a new adventure befell me.

I saw a crystal cliff, and at the foot of it, a maiden dressed in white whom I had seen before.

The longer I scanned her, the gladder I was. I wanted to call her, but diffidence held me back. She raised her head and my heart was stung by the sight.

## IV

I was frightened and stood still. I feared she would vanish before I spoke to her. Before I could speak she rose up—a precious maid clad in pearls.

There might one see a royal array of pearls when she as fresh as a fleur de lis came down the bank, all glistening white, her garments heavily trimmed with pearls.

She wore a crown of pearls. Her face was white as ivory. Her hair was like shorn gold.

Her garments were heavily embroidered with pearls, but on her breast there hung a single pearl so precious and spotless that no man might set a price on it.

She came toward me—she was nearer than aunt or niece—she took off her crown and graciously saluted me.

## V

“O Pearl,” I cried, “clad in pearls, are you my pearl that I have mourned? I have been wasted by grief, and you have been in a pleasant place in Paradise.

What Wyrd has snatched away my jewel and put me in such grief? Since we were parted I have been but a joyless jeweler."

That jewel then resumed her crown and said soberly: "Sir, you have erred in saying that your pearl is lost when it is enclosed in so comely a coffer as this garden. Here were a treasure-chest indeed for you if you were a gentle jeweler.

"But if you lose your joy for a gem that was dear to you, you are mad, and busy yourself with a trifle. What you have lost was a perishable flower, which through the nature of the chest in which it was enclosed has become a precious pearl. You call your Wyrd a thief that made you something out of nothing—you blame the cure of your ills."

A jewel she was then to me and her words were jewels. "Surely, my dear, I beg pardon. I thought my pearl lost. Now I have found it I shall keep it and thank God Who has brought me this joy. If I were on the other side of the river I should be happy."

"Jeweler," said this gem, "why do you jest? You have spoken three foolish things at once. You say you think I am in this land because you see me with your eyes; you say you shall live here with me; you say you will pass this water. No joyful jeweler may do this.

## VI

"That jeweler is little to praise who loves what he sees with his eyes. He is much to blame and discourteous who believes that our Lord would lie Whom promised to raise you alive though your flesh die. If you believe only what you see, you set His words awry. That is the sin of Pride that each good man shuns, to believe that alone is true which his own judgment deems so.

"You say you shall come across here. You should first ask leave, and it might not be granted you. First you must leave your corpse in the earth, for it was forfeit in Paradise. Each one must die before coming here."

Then I said: "If you condemn me again to grief, I shall pine away. I care for nothing if I cannot have my pearl.

## VII

"You bring me nothing but grief." Then she said, "Because of grieving for a lesser loss, many a man loses something greater. You ought to manage better and love God and weal and woe. No matter how you rage you must abide His judgment.

"Cease your proud mourning and pray for His pity. He can make your grief less, for all lies in His power alone."

Then I said unto her, "May the Lord not become angry because I in my grief have said wild things—I throw myself on His mercy. Do not rebuke me, for you first brought me sorrow.

"We were so close to each other, God forbid that we should now quarrel. Though you speak so courteously, I am only a botcher. My bliss is founded on Christ's mercy, and Mary and John.

"Now since I am with you, tell me how you lead your life, for I am happy to see you raised to such eminence."

"Now you are better fitted to be in this place," she said, "for Pride is hated here. Those who come into the presence of my Lord the Lamb must be devout in utter meekness.

"I was young when I came here, yet the Lamb wedded me and gave me part in all His heritage. I am wholly His."

## VIII

"Sweetheart," I said, "are you truly queen of heaven? What then about Mary?"

"Courteous Queen," she said and knelt, "although many come here, she, the Empress, being Queen of Courtesy, will refuse none welcome.

"The Court of the Kingdom of the Living God has such property that each one who comes there may be queen or king without depriving any other. All are glad of each new arrival. Mary is Empress of all, at which all are delighted.

"As St. Paul says, 'We are all members of the body of Jesus Christ,' so there can be no quarrel amongst us."

"I believe that there is great courtesy and charity amongst you, but let me ask—since you who were so young get such a high place, what would he who lived in penance all his life get that was better?"

## IX

"You lived not two years—knew neither Pater nor Credo—and yet made queen on the first day! I do not believe that God would be so unjust. Countess in heaven were good enough, but queen——"

"The mercy of God is not limited," she said; "witness the parable of the vineyard.

## X

"I have more joy and bliss of His free gift than any man might gain by demanding his right. I labored only from evening time. Others sweat all day and have received nothing—may not for a long time."

Then I said, "That sounds unreasonable. In the Psalter it says: 'Thou payest each his due.' This does not look like it."

## XI

"In heaven," she said, "there is no question of more or less, for He gives His grace so lavishly.

"But you blame me for getting more than I earned. Who upon earth has been so holy that he has not at some time forfeited his heavenly reward? And the older he gets the oftener it happens. Then God's mercy and grace must steer him.

"But children as soon as they are born and baptized come into the vineyard. They have enough grace of their innocence. Why should they then not be rewarded accordingly?"

It is well known how we were created for bliss, but through Adam's fall we forfeited it. But there came a cure for it: rich blood and winsome water from a rood gave us the grace of God.

"From that well came blood to buy us from hell and water of baptism to wash away our sins. Now bliss is brought close to us. (13)

## XII

"The man who sins may buy grace with sorrow and remorse, but it is only justice that the innocent be saved.

"Two shall be saved—the righteous and the innocent.

"The righteous attain to the kingdom by great carefulness, but the innocent are safe.

"When you come to the court where all cases are tried, may you plead the passion of our Lord as your right.

"Remember how Jesus called the little ones to Him and said that of such was the Kingdom of Heaven.

## XIII

"Jesus said that none might enter heaven unless he came as a little child—then it shall be opened unto him. This is the bliss that the jeweler sold all to buy—the priceless pearl.

"This pearl is like the Kingdom of Heaven. It is in the midst of my breast where my Lord the Lamb placed it in token of peace. I advise you to purchase your precious pearl."

"O precious pearl, who gave you your peerless figure, your lovely garments, your color? What sort of meaning has the pearl without price?"

"My Lamb without spot chose me as His bride; gave me might and beauty, and decked me in pearls."

"Who may that Lamb be who overlooked so many beautiful ladies and chose you alone as bride?"

(13)

"Now is þer noȝt in þe worlde rounde  
Bytwene us & blysse both þat he wythdroȝ,  
& þat is restored in sely stounde." vv.657-9.

Dr. Osgood renders this: "Now is there no obstacle between us and bliss that he has not withdrawn, and no means of approach that he has not restored." *The Pearl* . . . rendered into prose. Princeton, N.J., 1907, p.78.

Miss Jewett reads it substantially the same:

"Now is there nothing in earth's great round,  
To bar from the bliss wherewith God did endow  
Mankind,—restored to us safe and sound."

*The Pearl...A Modern Version.* By Sophie Jewett, N. Y. Thos. Y. Crowell & Co., 1908.

Nelson & Webster translate it: "Now is there naught in the round world between us and bliss that he has not withdrawn; and in happy hour is bliss restored. NOTE: The MS., þat, subject of "is restored," is obscure. The Chief British Poets of the 14th and 15th Centuries. Houghton Mifflin.

Literally, of course, it reads: "Now is there nought in the round world between us and bliss but that He withdrew, and that is restored in a blessed moment." If I am right in my interpretation, this refers to the sacring of the Mass, wherein He revisits His people

XIV

"I am without spot, it is true, but not peerless, for there are 144,000 of us as you may read in the Apocalypse, of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

"In Jerusalem Isaiah prophesied of my Lamb.

"In Jerusalem He died for us.

"St. John baptized Him in Jordan as a Lamb Who taketh away the sins of the world.

"Thrice was my Love called Lamb in Jerusalem—the third time in the Apocalypse.

XV

"This Jerusalem Lamb is spotless and it befits Him to have only a spotless bride. Numbers of them come each day—the more the merrier.

"None who bear this pearl could ever bring sorrow to us. Our hope is in the One Death although we are conscious of our bodies being clay. The Lamb gladdens us at each Mass.

"If you don't believe me, read the Apocalypse.

"Only those of His following can sing the song of the Lamb—those who are like Him in face and hue. That spotless meiny may never move from their spotless master."

"I am but muck, yet I should like to ask you a question.

XVI

"You speak of Jerusalem. Is it not in Judea? Surely you should live in a lovelier place!

"Those beautiful hosts must fill a great city, but I see no dwelling hereabout. Pray direct me to that merry castle."

"By that castle you mean Judea," that rare spice said to me. "But to the New Jerusalem of which the Apostle spoke in the Apocalypse the spotless Lamb has taken His flock.

"Both are called Jerusalem, *i.e.*, City of God, or Site of Peace. The one was the scene of the Lamb's Passion, the other is full of peace. This is the city that we press forward to after death, where to the pure, bliss and glory ever increase."

Then said I, "Bring me to that dwelling." "God will not allow that but I have permission from the Lamb that you may have a glimpse of it, yet you cannot come within until you are spotless.

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in the flesh. "Now is there nothing that separates us from bliss but that He withdrew Himself, and in a blissful moment He restores Himself to us."

An examination of the whole stanza will strengthen this interpretation: the symbolism of the blood and water is explained—the blood redeemed us and the water is baptism. But when Baptism is mentioned as explaining the Water from the Wounded Side, the mind used to sacramental language at once expects the usual interpretation of the Blood as the Eucharist; in such cases the linking of the two sacraments "generally necessary to salvation" being not only natural but almost inevitable.

XVII

"If you want to see, come up to this hill on your side of the river and I will follow on my side." Then I climbed the hill and saw a beautiful sight as St. John saw it in the Apocalypse:

A city of precious gems with twelve foundations: Jasper, Sapphire, Chalcedony, Emerald, Sardonyx, Ruby, Chrysolite, Beryl, Topaz, Jacynth, Amethyst, walls of Jasper, streets of gold, twelve furlongs long, high and broad.

XVIII

Twelve gates, each a pearl, with names of the twelve tribes. They needed sun nor moon.

For the Lamb was their lantern, through Him the city was bright. The Throne I saw, and the bright river underneath.

No church, chapel nor temple was there. The Almighty was the minister to reproduce the sacrifice of the Lamb. Therein come none who are not guiltless.

Moon, stars, and even sun are too poor to use there. Trees bear the twelve fruits of life twelve times in the year.

I was as a dazed quail with the beauty of it all. It was more than flesh might bear.

XIX

Suddenly there came a great procession of maidens, as my blissful, dressed in pearls, and on each breast was the blissful pearl.

The Lamb preceded them—His garments were like pearls. They went toward the Throne.

Saints and angels fell at His feet in worship of that Jewel.

He was white and fair, but in His side was a wide wound from which blood flowed. Alas! who did that deed?

The Lamb showed no pain nor did His following show any concern. I looked among them and saw my little Queen, who I had thought stood by my side. For love of her I started to wade across.

XX

I started to cast myself into the stream but I had to change my purpose, for it was not to my Prince's pleasure.

As I started, I awoke in the arbor. I was frightened and said to myself, sighing, "Now all be to that Prince's pleasure."

I did not like to be shut out from that vision, but I said, "O Pearl, if it be true that you are so honored, then I am content in this dungeon of sorrow, since you have pleased the Prince."

If I had always directed myself to that Prince's pleasure and been content with what He revealed to me, I had been drawn to more of His mysteries. Lord, they are mad who strive against Thee or proffer Thee anything contrary to Thy pleasure.

To please that Prince is very easy for the good Christian. (14) This I learned on this mound, lying for grief of my Pearl, that in the form of bread and wine which the priest shows us every day, He granted us to be His own servants and precious pearls unto His pleasure. (15)

- (14) "To pay þe Prince oþer sete hym sæte  
Hit is ful eþe to þe god Krystyn;  
For I haf founden hym, boþe day & najte,  
A God, a Lorde, a Frende ful fyin, etc." vv.1201-4.

A curiously parallel passage is found in the poem called "With God of Love and Pes, 3e Trete," printed in "Twenty-six Political and Other Poems," E.E.T.S. O.S. 124.34:

"Now sumwhat y haue jow sayd  
What is salue to joure sore. (i.e., Confession)  
To sauten wiþ god, holde jow payed,  
And arraye jow wel þerfore  
To resceyue god, joure soules store,  
His body in forme of bred o whete,  
And kepe hym: so þe nede no more  
Eft of pes wiþ hym to trete." vv.177-184.

- (15) "Ouer þis hyill þis lote I lazte,  
For pyty of my perle enclȳn,  
& syþen to God I hit bytaþe,  
In Kryste; dere blessing & myn,  
þat, in þe forme of bred & wyn,  
þe preste vus schewe; vch a daye,  
He gef vus to be his homly hyne,  
Ande precious perle; vnto his pay. Amen. Amen."  
vv.1202-1212.

Dr. Osgood reads: "Such as I have now told was the fortune that befell me at this mound, bowed in grief for my Pearl; and straight way I gave her up unto God in Christ's dear blessing and mine own—he whom in the form of bread and wine the priest showeth unto us each day. And now may Christ our Prince grant that we become servants of his own household, and precious pearls to delight him ever. Amen."

Miss Jewett: "Upon this mound my soul hath sight  
Where I for piteous sorrow pine;  
My Pearl to God I pledge and plight,  
With Christ's dear blessing and with mine,—  
His, Who, in form of bread and wine,  
The priest doth daily show us still.  
His servants may we be, or shine,  
Pure pearls, according to his will."

Neilson and Webster: "On this mound this fortune I experienced, bowed down with pity for my pearl; and afterwards I betook it to God, in the dear joy and memory of Christ, whom, in the form of bread and wine, the priest shows us every day. May he grant us to be his lowly servants, and precious pearls unto his pleasure."

In the preceding stanza the poet tells us that if he had done his duty as a Christian he should have found out long ago and without the agency of the Pearl more of God's secrets which He tells those who seek His Presence:

"To þat Prynce; paye hade I ay bente,  
& jerned no more þen wat; me geuen,  
& halden me þer in trwe entent,  
As þe perle me prayed þat wat; so þryuen,  
As helder drawen to Godde; present,  
To mo of his mysterys I hade ben dryuen." vv.1189-1194.

The last stanza is an explanation of this statement. Rearranging the punctuation of the passage as given in Prof. Osgood's edition, by substituting a comma for the period at the close of v.1210, the meaning would be something like this: "Upon this mound this lot I got, bowed down with grief for my Pearl, and then I entrusted it (þis lote) to God in Christ's dear blessing and memory, that in the form of bread and wine which the priest shows us every day, He gave us the way to become servants of His household and precious pearls unto His pleasure." This is the mystery to which the Pearl drove him.



Reduced to simpler terms, the argument is: A man has lost by death a little child who was the most precious part of his life. He is desperate with grief. On a high feast day he goes mourning to the place where his Pearl is buried:

"To þat spot þat I in speche expoun  
I entred, in þat erber grene,  
In Augoste in a hyȝ seysoun,  
Quen corne is coruen wyth crokej kene." vv.37-40,

and there he receives a message of comfort from her. She is well and happy and chides him for doubting it:

"Sir, ȝe haf your tale mysetente,  
To say your perle is al aways,  
þat is in cofer so comly elente,  
As in þis gardyn gracios gaye,  
Hereinne to lenge for euer & play,  
þer mys nee mornynȝ com neuer nere;  
Her were a forser for þe in faye,  
If þou were a gentyl jueler  
'But, jueler gente, if þou schal lose  
þy ioȝ for a gemme þat þe watȝ lef,  
Me þynk þe put in a mad purpose,  
& busyeȝ þe aboute a raysoun bref;  
For þat þou lesteȝ watȝ bot a rose  
þat flowred & fayled as kynde hyt gef;  
Now þurȝ kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close  
To a perle of prys hit is put in pref.  
& þou hatȝ called þy wyrde a þef,  
þat oȝt of noȝt hatȝ mad þe cler,  
þou blameȝ þe bote of þy meschef,  
þou art no kynde jueler.'" vv.257-276.

She warns him against excessive grief:

"Thow demeȝ noȝt bot doel-dystresse,  
þenne sayde þat wyȝt; 'why dotȝ þou so?  
For dyne of doel of lureȝ lesse  
Ofte mony mon forȝos þe mo.'" vv.337-340.

She has her place in the mystical body of Christ:

"Al arn we membreȝ of Jesu Kryst;  
As heued & arme & legg & naule  
Temen to hys body ful trwe & tyste,  
Ryȝt so is veh a Krysten sawle  
A longande lym to þe Mayster of myste." vv.458-462.

the token whereof is a precious pearl upon her breast:

"Bot a wonder perle wythouten wemme  
In myddeȝ hyr breste watȝ sette so sure." vv.221-222.

He may also have a place there and wear his pearl as the sign of the perfect fellowship and communion of saints,

"For hit is wemleȝ, clene, & clere,  
& endeleȝ rounde, & blyȝe of mode,  
& commune to alle þat ryȝtwys were." vv.737-739.

"I rede þe forsake þe worlde wode,  
& porchase þy perle maskelles." vv.743-4.

but only if he conducts himself humbly

"For meke arn alle þat woneȝ hym nere,  
& when in hys place þou schal apere,  
Be dep deuote in hol mekenesse." vv.404-406.

and takes advantage of the means at his hand

"Now is þer noȝt in þe worlde rounde  
Bytwene vus & blysse bot þat he wythdroȝ,  
& þat is restored in sely stounde." vv.657-9.

She gains for him the privilege of beholding for a moment the supreme act of worship in heaven

"Þou may not enter wythinne hys tor,  
Bot of þe Lombe I haue þe aquylde  
For a syȝt þerof þurȝ gret fauor." vv.966-8.

so that he knows of a surety that she is there present where Christ is present (16)

"I loked among his meyny schene,  
How þay wyth lyf wern laste & lade;  
Þen saȝ I þer my lyttel quene,  
þat I wende had standen by me in sclade.  
Lorde, much of mirȝe watȝ þat ho made,  
Among her fereȝ þat watȝ so quyt!" vv.1145-1150.

He wakes and laments the fact that he has not been more attentive to seeking God's presence so that he might learn more of His mysteries:

"To þat Prynceȝ paye hade I ay bente,  
& ȝerned no more þen watȝ me geuen,  
& halden me þer in trwe entent,  
As þe perle me prayed þat watȝ so þryuen,  
As helder drawn to Goddeȝ present,  
To mo of his mysterys I hade ben dryuen." vv.1189-1194.

At last he decides that it is very simple for a good Christian to gain his part in the great Pearl, through the Sacrament of the Altar.

Stripped to the quick, the poem offers the teaching which has been given above (pp. 10-11) regarding the Communion of Saints: that the mourner should cast away his grief in the joy of regaining his beloved in the mystical body of

(16) Yet the Pearl speaks to him from earth as well as from heaven:

"'Sir, fele here porchaseȝ & fonges pray,  
Bot supplantoreȝ none wythinne þys place.'" vv.439-440.

where "here" is without doubt this earth, and "þys place" is heaven—speaks to him of course from the meeting place of the two realms—the Altar.

Christ, participation in which body is to be gained in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. (17)

The Eucharistic language and teaching of the poem is given peculiar point and beauty by the mechanical framework of the poem—each stanza is bound to its neighbor by refrain and word link, and each canto to the next in like manner; then when this flawlessness and polish is achieved, the last verse of the poem is knit to the first, shaping the whole into the form of a huge pearl. Within a large pearl, then the whole action of the poem takes place. (18)

### CONCLUSION

A very significant aspect of the poem is its concentration on the three persons—the Lamb, the Pearl, and the bereaved father. This simplicity is the more remarkable if there is a close relationship, as Prof. Schofield has pointed out, between *The Pearl* and the fourteenth Eclogue of Boccaccio. Boccaccio lies on the ground sleepless and sad, mourning for his little daughter Olympia, who is dead. While he is so employed, Olympia appears to him, gloriously transformed. She tells him that she owes her transformation to the Virgin, with whom she has gone to dwell. She sings a song in honor of the Saviour and of the Virgin, and tells of the joys of heaven.

Since the parallel is so close, one would naturally expect to hear in *The Pearl* a great deal about the Virgin as the merciful mother who would take care of the little maiden, and of the saints and angels, especially St. Michael, the conductor of the spirits of the dead; but aside from two passages, the Virgin is not mentioned, and the only saints are St. John Baptist who called Jesus the Lamb of God (v.818), and St. John the Divine as the author of the Apocalypse; once the poet mentions St. John in company with Christ and Mary as being the three whose mercy he looked unto to save him (v.383), but this most likely was a memory of the great Calvary group which hung in the church. That this great silence in a realm which was such a favorite theme for the poets did not arise from any "Lollard" dislike of "Mariolatry and saint worship" is made very clear by the actions of the maiden when the name of the Mother of Christ is mentioned:

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(17) As I write this, a poem comes to my notice which expresses the same thought:

"Lord, where Thou art our happy dead must be;

Unpierced as yet the Sacramental Mist,

But we are nearest them when nearest Thee

In solemn Eucharist." (Memoir of Arthur Stanton, p.275.)

(18) A very curious parallel to this artistic device, conceived more than a century later, is Raphael's *Disputa*, in the Camera della Segnatura in the Vatican. Here we get a glimpse into a perfect sphere, the central point of which is the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance. Below, on earth, men are vigorously championing the dogma, great tomes of commentary lying at their feet. Some of the greatest champions of the Church are there gathered, SS. Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Ambrose, Thomas Aquinas, Savonarola, and the poet Dante, the painter Fra Angelico, and Bramante, the architect of the basilica of St. Peter, the unfinished walls of which can be seen in the background. But above all this turmoil, surrounded by saints, the Trinity sheds down its reflection and full glory upon the Blessed Sacrament.

"'Cortayse Quen,' þenne sayde þat gaye,  
 Knelande to grounde, folde vp hyr face,  
 'Makeleþ Moder & myrrest May,  
 Blessed Bygynner of vch a grace!'" vv.433-6.

The true reason is that such attentions would rob the poem of its fine simplicity and directness and would obscure its teaching — not that the Company of Heaven is considered *de trop*, for it is present worshipping the Lamb (vv.1118-1124).

The structure of the poem conforms roughly to that of the Mass—not, it is true, academically, but faintly and interrupted by dialogue to clear up knotty problems as they occur (19). We have the Pro-Anaphora, penitential and sorrowful in character; the Canon of the Mass; the threefold Agnus Dei, and the Adoration.

I have an idea that the whole poem arose from gazing at the Elevated Host in the hands of the Priest (see frontispiece) — "round, white, like a pearl, the meeting place of heaven and earth — a pearl, Margaret" — something like this would, I think, be the train of thought which would bring the germ of the poem to him. I believe that the poet conceives the poem as taking place within the church where the Pearl might be buried, quite regardless of the convention of the arbor and the grass (20). He goes to mourn her where he has lost her in the ground. He hears a song:

"Ȝet þoȝt me neuer so swete a sange  
 As styлле stounde let to me stele." vv.19-20.

Might this not be the chanting of the choir on this "hyȝ seysoun"? He smells odors and comments:

"Þat spot of spyceȝ mot nedeȝ sprede,  
 Per such rycheȝ to rot is runne." vv.25-6.

Cannot this be the incense? The enumeration of the flowers may be only the touch added as a quasi-pastoral device. As we have noticed before, the only two saints he mentions are SS. Mary and John. He had only to raise his eyes to the rood-beam and he would see them standing at the foot of the cross. Be this as it may,

(19) Such as the long passage containing the Parable of the Vineyard in which she vindicates her right to be a queen of heaven. Since she was only two years old and had consequently never received the Holy Communion, which was necessary to salvation, how could she occupy this place? St. Thomas Aquinas answers this: "As Augustine says in his Epistle to Boniface: No one should entertain the slightest doubt, that then every one of the faithful becomes a partaker of the body and blood of Christ, when in Baptism he is made a member of Christ's body; nor is he deprived of his share in that body and chalice even though he depart from this world in the unity of Christ's body before he eats that bread and drinks of that chalice." Summa, p.238.

(20) This convention is not uniformly consistent in the poem. It was a pearl that rolled away from him through the grass into the ground (v.10); again it was no pearl at all but a rose that bloomed and faded naturally (vv.269-70); it was a lovely flower (v.962); a special spice (vv.235,938); a seemingly seed (v.34). Also the names given to this spot are not uniform: huyle, v.41), flajt (v.57), and balke (v.62); whether "balke" means mound, or as is possible from the large percentage of Scandinavian words in the poem, a division of some kind, as a wall or a floor, the figure is at once broken and it is used consciously of a grave. An interesting question then arises as to whether a man of the undoubted evidence of culture and refinement which the poet possesses would conceive of his daughter being buried in the churchyard or in the church itself.

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the intrusion of pastoral elements into the poem need be no more fundamental than the intrusion of the Pagan elements in Boccaccio's Eclogue.

To recapitulate: Within the frame of a great pearl, the poet sees his lost Pearl in the presence of the Lamb of God, a very member incorporate in the mystical body of Christ; and she teaches him that through the grace of God as granted in the Eucharist it is given him to become a member of this body, thus to be forever united with his Pearl as parts of the great pearl, the mystical body of Christ.

Don't forget to mention  
the pearl - a pearl  
p 17

## Appendix A

## NOTE ON THE "HYȝ SEYSOUN"

*"In Augoste in a hyȝ seysoun."* v.39.

"'Hyȝ seysoun' is a high feast, and the highest feast in August and the one most likely thus to be designated, is that of the Assumption of the Virgin, on the fifteenth. The appropriateness of the date of this feast to the theme of the poem is obvious," Osgood, *Intro.* xvi.

" . . . doubtless, about the day of the Assumption of the Virgin," Schofield, *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.*, 1909, p.648.

It seems to me impossible that this should be the feast meant. I have noted above (p.35) that the Virgin gets very little mention in the poem, which fact would make the idea frankly incredible that the vision took place in "Lady Day in Harvest." The author of the *Cursor Mundi* devotes 837 verses to the Feast of the Assumption. Not even the remotest reference to it is found in *The Pearl*.

It seems that conforming with the content of the poem, the most appropriate feast in August would be the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, on August 7. There is in this festival the concentration on the merits of Christ which is so remarkable in the poem. All in all, it answers very well, if it were not for the fact that this feast was not commonly observed until quite a century later. It would be interesting if it were found that this feast had its origin in England. We read that "Ro. Hallum, Bishop of Salisbury, offered an indulgence for singing Mass of the Mellifluous Name of Jesus, from His Castle at Sherborne, as early as 7th August, 1411," (Wordsworth and Littlehales, p.178, Note), also that "the festival of the Most Sweet Name of Jesus, which was already in use in England, was specially sanctioned and endowed with privileges by Alexander VI (1493-1503). Note. Thereupon was added to the first and second lessons of Mattins an account of this transaction. See *Sar. Brev.* of 1531 (Cambridge reprint, III.621). This change was not yet made in the *Breviary* of 1510." (Procter and Frere, p.32.) This seems to have been a favorite festival amongst the Franciscans, two of whom stand out for unusually great devotion to the Holy Name — St. Bernardine (who wrote the Office and the Mass for the day), and John Capistran. "In 1530 the feast was granted to the Franciscans for February 25. Later the Franciscans, Carmelites and Augustinians observed it on the 14th of January, the Dominicans on the 15th of January. In the British Isles it was continued on the 7th of August, at Liege on the 31st of January, at Compostella and Cambrai on the 8th of January. About 1643 the Carthusians obtained it for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, which usage gradually spread, until in 1721 it was extended to the whole of the Roman Church with the exception of the Franciscans, who still observe the day on the 14th of January." (*Catholic Encyclopedia*.)

This looks very much as if the feast had its origin in England, since it is heard of there more than a century earlier than on the Continent. Did it originate among the English Franciscans, and may it have been observed by them some time

before it was indulgenced by the Bishop of Salisbury? The answer to these questions might conceivably throw some light on the authorship of *The Pearl*. It may be that eventually the British Society of Franciscan Studies may publish material which will solve these problems.

The same holds true of the Feast of the Transfiguration, on the sixth of August, which might hold our attention by its claims of being the "hyȝ seysoun"; Procter and Frere say concerning this festival: ". . . the two new general festivals of the Visitation and the Transfiguration were adopted in England in 1480, shortly after their promulgation by Rome. Note: This (the Transfiguration) was in some places a much older festival especially among the Benedictines." (p.329) (21) Yet the Transfiguration is not as fitting a holiday as a setting for the poem of *The Pearl* as is Holy Name Day.

We will probably do best if we look at the poem itself for a clue to the day in the author's mind:

"To þat spot þat I in speche expoun  
I entred, in þat erber grene,  
In Augoste in a hyȝ seysoun,  
Quen corne is coruen wyth crokeȝ kene." vv.37-40.

This may be a reference to the Feast of the First-fruits — *Lammas*, or *Loaf Mass*, the Feast of St. Peter's Chains. This was an ancient English feast, the connection with St. Peter being frequently lost sight of in the other aspects of it. There surely is a mystical symbolism in the offering of the loaf of the first fruits, and the popular name of the feast as it was known for centuries, *Lammas*, meant, quite unetymologically, it is true, the Feast of the Lamb (as it is given in *Promptorium Parvulorum*: "*lammasse, festum agnorum, uel Festum ad uinea S. Petri*"). All this with the fact that the day was also called the "*Gule of August*" where *Gule*=*yule*, feast (Plummer & Earle ii.128), shows that this feast was of sufficient importance to warrant its being called "a hyȝ seysoun in Augoste."

## Appendix B —————

### ST. HILARY OF POICTIERS, HIS DAUGHTER AND THE PEARL

The following letter which is printed in *The Cowley Evangelist*, edited by the Society of St. John the Evangelist, Oxford, March, 1895, is worth notice. Here the situation is quite reversed: the father out of love for the little daughter who is alive, tries to obtain for her the pearl. I quote the article entire:

The following letter of Saint Hilary of Poitiers to his daughter Abra was written about the end of A.D. 358, his daughter being about twelve years old. He

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(21) A careful investigation of local calendars and national variations would be a very acceptable work. Why is there so great a variation in the dates assigned the Feast of the Holy Name? Why did the Sarum Calendar in the 14th century not commemorate the Conversion of St. Paul on January 25?

was married, probably, before his conversion; and he was now in exile for the faith. The Benedictine editor says there is nothing in the letter unworthy of a pious (i.e., paternal, I suppose) and prudent father, who calls away one who is at once a dearest daughter and a very little girl (*puellam tenerrimam*) from the vain pomps and delights of the world by words suited to her apprehension:—

Hilary to his dearest daughter Abra sends health in the Lord.

1. I received your letter in which you say you miss me; and I am sure you do. For I feel how much we must wish for the presence of those we love. And because I know my absence is hard for you, I am anxious you should not think me unkind to you in being so long away; and so I want to explain to you why I went, and why I put off coming back, so that you may understand that it is not in unkindness but for your good that I make you do without me. For you, my daughter, are the only one I have, and my heart is all one with yours; and so I wish you to be, all your life, the prettiest girl and the happiest in every way (*sanissimam*).

Well, then, the news came to me that there is a certain Prince (*juvenis*), Who possesses a pearl and a robe of priceless value; and that whoever can obtain them from Him will become rich and strong beyond human riches and strength. When I heard this, I set off to go to Him; and after many long and painful journeys I found Him; and as soon as I saw Him I fell at His feet. For that young Prince is of such fair presence (*adest tam pulcher Juvenis*), that none may dare to stand up before His face. And when He saw me thus fallen before Him, He bade some ask what I desired, and what was my petition; and I answered that I had heard of His pearl and robe . . . and that if He should deign to grant me such a gift, I had a little daughter whom I tenderly loved, and that it was for her I would beg that robe and pearl. And saying all this still lying before His face, I wept a great deal, and begged Him night and day with groans that he would deign to hear my prayer. And after that, because that Prince is good, so that there is none beside better than He, He said to me: “Do you know this Robe and Pearl which you ask me with tears to give to your daughter?” And I answered, “My Lord. I have learned by report of them, and by faith I have believed; and I know they are the best of all, and it is true health and joy to wear them.” And with that, He gave orders to His servants to show me them; and so presently it was done. And first I saw the robe: I saw — Oh, my daughter! I cannot say what I saw. No silk but would seem coarse sailcloth by its side, so fine it was. Snow would be black beside its whiteness, and gold quite dull against its splendour. For it was of many different colours, and nothing in all the world could in any way be compared to it. And then I saw the pearl: and at the sight of it I fell down straight. For mine eyes could not bear its lovely colour, and the fairness of sky and light and sea and land cannot be compared to the beauty of it. And as I lay on my face, one of those who stood by said to me: “I see you are an affectionate, kind father, and that you want this robe and pearl for your little girl; but that you may want it still more, let me show you their wonderful qualities. The robe is never hurt by moths, nor worn by use, nor soiled, nor torn, nor lost; but it always stays just as



it is. And this is the virtue of the pearl, that whoever wears it is never ill, never gets old or dies. In fact, no harm whatever can come to the wearer." And when I heard this, dear child, I began to faint with longing for these gifts, and I cried again, and begged the Prince still harder to give them to me, saying "Holy Lord, have pity on my prayer, my care, my life. If Thou dost not give me what I beg, I shall be miserable, and I shall lose my daughter while she is still alive. I will go on pilgrimage for this robe and pearl. Thou knowest that I speak the truth."

And then He told me to rise, and said: "Your prayers and tears have moved me, and you have done well in believing. And because you have offered to spend your life for them, I cannot refuse the gifts: but you must know My will. The robe I give is such that no one can have it who wishes to wear other robes of silk and fair colours and gold; but I give it only to those who are content with plain stuff clothes. And my pearl is such that it must be worn *alone*; other pearls are from the earth or sea; mine, as you see, is heavenly, and it is not fit that it should be where any others are. For my good things do not sort well with those of men, for he who wears my pearl is well forever, no fever, wounds or age or death may touch him. But I will give you my robe and pearl, and you shall take them to your little girl. But first you ought to know what is *her* will. If she will make herself fit for my robe and pearl, that is by not caring for silken golden-broidered dresses, and if she hates all other pearls, then I will give you what you ask."

And so I got up, full of joy; and now I have learned this secret, have written this letter to you, praying you to do what the Prince bids. Therefore when they bring you any dress of silk, or rarely trimmed, and guarded with gold, you must say to him who offers it: "I am waiting for another robe, for which my father is making a long pilgrimage, and if I accept this I cannot have *that* one. The wool of my sheep is enough for me, and the colour which nature gave, and a plain uncostly texture. But I wish for that robe which is said never to be lost or worn or torn."

And if they offer you pearls for your neck or hands, say: "Do not let me be cumbered with these useless common pearls (*sordidæ*); I am waiting for that one which is most precious, loveliest, and best to wear (*utilissima*). I believe my father's word, because he believes that One who promised this pearl, and he told me he would die to get that pearl I wait for and covet, which will give me health and everlasting joy."

Be sure, then, to help me in my care for you, and always read this letter, and keep yourself for this robe and pearl; and without asking anyone about it, write back to me in the first letter you can make by yourself, and tell me whether you *will* keep yourself for this robe and pearl, so that I may know what answer I may make to the Prince. And if that is your desire, then I shall be able to think with joy of coming back to you. And when you have written to me, I will tell you who the Prince is, and what His dignity, and what His will is, and His promise, and His power. Meanwhile I send you a hymn for morning and evening, to remember me by. And if, because you are only a little girl, you do not quite understand the letter and the hymn, ask mother to explain, who wishes by her good

nurture to make you a true child of God (*quæ optat ut te moribus suis genuerit Deo*). For God is already your Father, and my prayer is, dearest daughter, that He may keep you both in this life and forever. Migne.Patrol.Latin. X.549 ff.

The translator says modestly "The translation is only rough, and leaves out many beautiful details." As a matter of fact, the translation is peculiarly adequate, and the parts omitted are fragmentary phrases which have no special bearing on the allegory. The hymn referred to is "*Luceis largitor splendide*."

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